FOCUS on FACILITIES
Diocese of Cleveland Facilities Services Corporation

Surveying Exterior Structures

In the past two years we have addressed the topic of building exteriors including discussions on lightning protection, first impressions of the building, security walk-around survey, and issues affecting older buildings. This month we will share our thoughts on what should be included in an exterior structure survey checklist and why.

Let's revisit the importance of first impressions by visitors and individuals who work in the building. One will want to believe the facility is structurally sound including being up to code. Also, it should be an inviting building to walk into and not be dreary and/or with signs of needed repair. The grounds around this structure should be well kept and devoid of potential security concerns e.g., overgrown trees partially concealing the entrance. These are all first impressions perceptions of what this facility represents. A more substantial approach to assessing the building exterior is to complete a comprehensive survey of this facility.

To commence with such an assignment requires upfront administrative work before a survey team can go out and tour the site and take note of the existing conditions. There should be a "purpose" for the survey followed by a discussion among a select few qualified to formulate the "purpose". Next, a committee should be formed made up of a few individuals with experience and educated in the construction industry. In addition, consultants could be brought on to assist and should include at a minimum a structural engineer and an estimator.

With the "purpose" agreed upon, the committee will need to authorize a budget to manage the work and to also establish a project timeline to perform the work and submit the recommendations.

It is essential that a survey checklist be drafted to assure a means to control the quality of the survey work documenting the existing conditions, including

photographs so the estimator can establish the individual costs and budget timeline to complete each task. With the estimated work, the committee will be able to prioritize the work to be completed immediately, within the next year, and in specific years to come.

To draft the survey checklist there will need to be an identification of the classification of building e.g., church, school, healthcare facility, etc. Based on the type of building to be surveyed the checklist will require separating the responsibilities into the following categories:

- General building materials e.g., siding, masonry, etc.
- Roofs
- Windows
- Entrances, exits, and access e.g., doors, stairs, fire escape, porches, etc.
- Exterior lighting and security devices

- Exterior plumbing e.g., vents
- HVAC (heating, ventilating, and air-conditioning) e.g., air louvers, through-the-wall equipment, etc.
- Landscape hazards e.g., tree limb over the building, etc.

For an example checklist, click here.

It is also suggested that the project budget for an exterior infrared survey assessment. Refer to *Focus on Facilities* Facility Management column September 2020 titled "*Planning an Infrared Building Exterior Survey*". Infrared surveys can bring out deficiencies that can be overlooked by the human eye and a "picture is worth a 1,000 words" with infrared photographs.

Another option to consider when surveying the exterior is to score the observation with Poor=1, Fair=2, Good=3, and Very Good=4. Unless the component is brand new there probably isn't an Excellent=5.

The final report should provide the recommendations of the team with an initial draft of the Exterior Survey along with a tentative timeline and cost to proceed forward with obtaining funds to make the improvements. It is also suggested that when drafting up the final report that the committee refer to our *Focus on Facilities* June 2019 Asset Management column, *"Facility Assessment = Your Building Condition Index"* to further assist in the writing and recommendations.

The Diocese of Cleveland Facilities Services Corporation is available to assist and will work with you to review your site, identify capital improvement opportunities and help you build a 5-year capital plan.

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